

Responses to Comments from the Resident Advisory Board and State-Wide Public Hearings

February 27, 2007

Resident Advisory Board (RAB) Recommendations

Five Year Plan

The RAB has reviewed the Five-Year Plan and the RAB has no recommendations-comments at this time.

Annual Plan

Component 1: Housing Needs

- a. The RAB recommends that all federal housing projects be in compliance with ADA guidelines. The RAB feels that residents, who are handicapped, have the right to go in and out of their community freely without obstacles.

Response: HPHA agrees with this recommendation and are making ADA modifications for newly constructed and modernized units.

- b. The RAB recommends that HPHA install adequate lighting in all federal housing projects. The areas that the RAB are most concerned with are the parking lots, courtyards and common area where inadequate lighting may result in unwanted activity.

Response: HPHA agrees with this recommendation and will work with management units and residents to identify and prioritize where adequate lighting is needed and should be installed.

Component 2: Statement of Financial Resources

- a. The RAB recommends that HPHA develop guidelines, for the management units, in the issuance of Resident Participation Funds to the resident associations. In addition, the RAB feels that the funds MUST be diligently relinquished on a yearly basis.

Response: HPHA has existing guidelines and will disburse resident participation funds according to the resident participation fund policy.

Component 3: Eligibility, Selection and Admission

- a. In regards to income mixing and de-concentration efforts by HPHA, the RAB recommends that the curbside appeal of all federal public housing communities be improved so that housing projects may be able to attract higher income tenants.

Response: HPHA agrees that curbside appeal is important and encourages residents to take pride in their community by getting involved to improve the appearance of their projects.

- b. The RAB strongly feels that some communities are overloaded with tenants of one ethnicity. The RAB recommends that HPHA find ways within the limits of the law, to avoid the stacking of ethnicities within one complex.

Response: HPHA's responsibility is to provide low income families with safe, clean and decent shelter. Currently, at the time of application, a family can designate 3 geographic areas they want to live. HPHA is not in the position to steer families away from an eligible unit because a majority of tenants happens to be of a certain race and ethnicity.

- c. Within the preferences listed in the PHA Plan, the RAB feels that the homeless preference needs to be revisited to clearly include the houseless and the hidden homeless.

Response: HPHA is in the process of changing administrative rules to give a preference to the sheltered and unsheltered homeless, who are in compliance with their service plan.

Component 4: Rent Determination Policies

The RAB has reviewed Component 4: Rent Determination Policies and has no comment at this time to this section of HPHA's 2007- 2008 annual plan.

Component 5: Operations and Management

- a. The RAB has recommended and continues to recommend to HPHA a billing system that reflects two different charges, one for rent charges and the other for maintenance charges. The current system takes maintenance fees out first, which often leaves residents with rent balances that are considered delinquent.

Response: Emphasys generates only one bill for all tenant charges, however, the system has the capability to prioritize what gets paid first. With this capability, separate bills should not be necessary. Billing codes were adjusted in September 2005 where rent should be paid first and work orders were near the bottom of the priority list.

- b. The RAB recommends that management units follow the newly established 25 day turnaround for vacant units. The RAB feels that HPHA should follow the 25 days turnaround especially for A and B units.

Response: HPHA agrees and is working hard to achieve the goal of turning a unit around in 25 days.

- c. The RAB recommends that management unit hours be staggered over an 18 hour period each day. This will ensure that management will be on site when infractions occur, allowing them to immediately report them and to take appropriate administrative action.
 - a. Staggered work hours will also ensure that HPHA staff will be able to attend to emergencies should they occur.

Response: HPHA strongly encourages residents to call 911 for disturbances and to report the incident to management as soon as possible. HPHA disagrees with this recommendation that management hours be staggered to cover an 18 hour period. HPHA has an after-hours call out procedure for maintenance emergencies.

- d. The RAB recommends that a translator be present when tenants, whose first language is not English, are filling out documents to live in federal public housing. The RAB strongly feels that it is important for tenants to understand from the start what their rights, rules and responsibilities are.

Response: HPHA currently offers free translation services for residents and applicants.

- e. The RAB recommends that HPHA provide training for mediation. This will enable management to properly deal with volatile situations and actions between tenants and management, which may circumvent eviction.

Response: HPHA provides mediation training for management.

- f. With HPHA's transition to project based budgeting, the RAB strongly feels that HPHA and the management units MUST be held accountable for the non-payment of rent and not allow rent to accumulate to the point where tenants would be evicted.

Response: HPHA agrees with this recommendation. HPHA has a rent collection policy in place and will ensure that managers are following the proper policy and procedures in the collection of rent.

Component 6: Grievance Procedures

- a. The RAB feels that HPHA makes the grievance process more complicated than it actually is, causing tenants to not utilize the process for complaints such as unsafe conditions, tenant files not being readily accessible, the performance of the maintenance staff, or rent not being calculated correctly.
- b. The RAB recommends that the grievance procedures be put into plain language so that all residents may be able to understand the grievance procedure and process.

Response: HPHA is in the process of developing a booklet on the grievance procedures to make it easier for residents to understand.

- c. Due to the numerous nationalities residing in federal public housing, the RAB recommends that the grievance procedures should be translated into various languages so that residents are able to understand their rights and the grievance process from start to end.

Response: HPHA is required by HUD to develop a Limited English Proficiency plan to provide meaningful access for residents and applicants.

Component 7: Capital Improvement Needs

The RAB has reviewed Component 7: Capital Improvement Needs and has no comment at this time.

Component 8: Demolition and Disposition

- a. The RAB strongly recommends that contractors, upon receiving notice of award of a contract, be held to the agreed amount stated in the contract. In addition, HPHA should monitor progress of contracts to observe that the work stated in the contract is being done according to the timeline specified.

Response: HPHA generally agrees that contract costs will be adhered to. HPHA currently monitors the progress of contracts and verifies that all work is being done according to the plans, specifications and timelines.

- b. The RAB is concerned that HPHA is not holding to the timetable for the demolition of units. In many instances, units are vacated and left empty for months before demolition actually occurs. This contributes to “broken window” scenario, which attracts crime (drug dealing and loitering) and other unwanted activities into the community.

Response: Demolition plans proceed only when funds are made available. Since there are no funds available at this time and the demand for housing units great, the HPHA has decided to not demolish seventy-two (72) units at Kalihi Valley Homes with plans to return these units to the rental supply upon HUD approval and renovations.

- c. The RAB has repeatedly asked for better lines of communication between HPHA Engineers and residents concerning the status of construction work being done on their community. Communication should include a projected timetable as to when the construction will start and be completed.

Response: HPHA agrees that communication with residents is important, so a timetable will be provided to the specific project and the Management Unit.

Component 9: Designation of Public Housing

The RAB has reviewed Component 9: Designation of Public Housing and has no comment at this time.

Component 10: Conversion of Public Housing

The RAB has reviewed Component 10: Conversion of Public Housing and has no comment/recommendation at this time.

Component 11: Homeownership

The RAB has reviewed Component 11: Home Ownership and has no comment at this time.

Component 12: Community Service and Self-Sufficiency

- a. The RAB strongly feels that HPHA failed to properly budget funds, so that self sufficiency programs would not stagnate or be terminated. The RAB strongly recommends that HPHA earmark grants or funding to enable these programs to continue so that residents may be able to take advantage of the benefits there programs have to offer.

Response: HPHA agrees that these programs are beneficial to all residents, but at this time , the agency's financial resources are being prioritized in other areas of concern.

- b. The RAB strongly feels that HPHA should secure funding to hire a third-party to administer and monitor the community service requirement.

Response: HPHA has chosen to use management units to administer and monitor the community service requirements.

- c. To help residents fulfill their community service requirement, the RAB feels that management should accept the hours, that residents spend doing resident association activities, such as the volunteer resident patrol and community cleanup and beautification, towards the community service monthly requirement.

Response: HPHA agrees with this recommendation. HPHA will make sure that all management units credit resident volunteer hours towards the monthly 8 hour community service requirement.

Component 13: Crime and Safety

- a. The RAB recommends that HPHA allocate funding to both current and newly formed tenant initiated security walk programs, for all federal public housing throughout the state.

Response: HPHA needs more specific information as to how the funding will be used.

- b. The RAB recommends that HPHA re-assess current expenditures being spent for uniform security services. The RAB strongly feels that funding currently being used for uniformed security services could be used to impact more than one community.

Response: HPHA agrees with this recommendation.

- c. The RAB recommends that an assessment be done on what the security limitations are of the uniformed security services and what specific crimes these security services are deterring.

Response: Security contracts specify the scope of services that are to be provided.

- d. The RAB recommends the following to be done by HPHA to ensure the safety of all federal public housing residents.
- Install strategic located lighting fixtures to deter criminal activity and to assist in the reduction of the crime rate in the projects.
 - ***Response: Addressed in response to component 1B***
 - Provide and post in communities crime deterrent, neighborhood watch and no trespassing signs.
 - ***Response: HPHA agrees and will look into putting up such signs.***
 - Provide information to all communities on the sex offenders located within or around their communities.
 - ***Response: Information on all convicted sex offenders is available on the internet.***
 - Hire off duty police officers or sheriffs to provide security services in the highly volatile communities.
 - ***Response: HPHA has already contracted private security companies for highly volatile communities. HPHA will consider on a case by case basis, security services for a specific community.***
- e. In support of the trespassing initiative, the RAB recommends that HPHA should give authorization to association presidents or a community designee to work with the Honolulu Police Department should they be called into their community during off hours.

Response: HPHA disagrees with this recommendation. HPHA doesn't want to jeopardize the safety of the resident.

- f. The RAB recommends that management unit hours be staggered over an 18 hour period each day. This will ensure that management will be on site when

infractions occur, allowing them to immediately report them and to take appropriate administrative action.

- Staggered work hours will also ensure that HPHA staff will be able to attend to emergencies should they occur.

Response: HPHA strongly encourages residents to call 911 for disturbances and to report the incident to management as soon as possible. HPHA disagrees with this recommendation that management hours be staggered to cover an 18 hour period. HPHA has an after-hours call out procedure for maintenance emergencies.

Component 14: Pet Policy

- a. The RAB recommends that HPHA secure funds to hire an independent third-party to administer and monitor the pet policy.

Response: HPHA has chosen to use management units to administer and monitor the pet policy.

Component 15: Civil Rights Certification

HPHA proposed no changes to this section. The RAB has reviewed Component 15: Civil Rights Certification and has no recommendations at this time.

Component 16: Fiscal Audit

HPHA proposed no changes to this section. The RAB has reviewed Component 16: Fiscal Audit and has no recommendations at this time.

Component 17: PHA Asset Management

HPHA proposed no changes to this section. The RAB has review Component 17: Asset Management and has no recommendations at this time.

Component 18: Other Information

- a. The RAB recommends that HPHA financially support, up to \$40 per person, PC/telecommunications for the RAB and Associations for the purpose of

communication and networking with members throughout federal projects throughout the state.

Response: Resident associations have the choice in allotting a part of their resident participation funds to purchase equipment for communication and networking among associations.

Comments from the Public Hearings (April 9, 2007)

Five -Year Plan

No public hearing comments were received on the Five-Year Plan.

Annual Plan

1. Housing Needs

No public hearing comments were received.

2. Financial Resources

No public hearing comments were received.

3. Policies on Eligibility, Selection and Admissions

- a. In West Hawaii, a third party should do applications and eligibility because all is done in East Hawaii, which is not appropriate because they are not looking at vacancies in West Hawaii that needs to be filled because we have families that are homeless and need homes and East Hawaii has too much to handle and they are not cutting it so the bottom line is that a third party is needed to help West Hawaii projects to be filled.

Response: HPHA will be reviewing the current process and if appropriate procedural changes will be made if deficiencies are found.

4. Rent Determination Policies

- a. Zero rent should not be allowed as it does not help families to be self-sufficient as the plan throughout the previous years and the upcoming years, if you leave them at zero rent, they will not make an effort to get a job to build self-sufficiency. If you give them a minimum rent of \$50.00 at least more effort will be made to gain employment and build a more stable life for them and their families. With the zero rent, you are giving them the opportunity to be lazier and not become more self-sufficient. I think it is not helping the people themselves.

- b. I don't believe it is appropriate because people should not live there for free. \$50.00 on a zero income is more than fair otherwise everyone will want to "play the game" and cannot get things done. If you are using the rental monies for maintenance help, then \$50.00 is more than fair. I do not totally agree with zero rent.

Response: HPHA agrees and will consider increasing minimum rents in the future.

5. Operations and Management Policies

- a. Vacancies are supposed to be turned around in a 25-day period but its not being done because there is not enough manpower from the agency or the management company. Need to stop buying second-hand equipment – need equipment that works.

Response: HPHA agrees and is working hard to achieve the goal of turning a unit around in 25 days and has made progress in this area.

6. Grievance Procedures

No public hearing comments were received.

7. Capital Improvements

- a. What improvements are planned for State Kawailehua on Kauai this year and next?

Response: The State Kawailehua project will have the dryer vents improved in the community center laundry area, and the mailboxes and surrounding sidewalks will be modified for handicap accessibility.

8 Demolition and Disposition

- a. On the demolition at Kalihi Valley Homes, is the demolition funds being used to complete renovations and what is the time scale?

Response: Approximately \$400,000 will be required to demolish 8 buildings at Kalihi Valley Homes. On March 21, 2007 HPHA sent a letter requesting to amend the demolition application and forego demolishing the 8 buildings. If the request is approved, HPHA will be repairing the vacant units in those buildings to allow placement of 72 families.

9. Designation of Housing

No public hearing comments were received.

10. Conversions of Public Housing

No public hearing comments were received

11. Homeownership

- a. I think you should try the pilot program on other islands besides only Oahu. Maybe you may get a better turnout on the outer islands.

Response: HPHA is focusing on its core functions and does not have plans to expand the program at this time.

12. Community Service Program

- a. You need to become stricter with the Community Service because lots of people are required to do it but are not. You must get a better system to get the Community Service to work for the community.

Response: HPHA has recently initiated new procedures for all management units on the reporting of Community Service compliance and non-compliance. Residents will be evaluated annually to determine their status on the community service requirements. Management is currently creating more opportunities within their projects for residents to fulfill their community service hours.

13. Crime and Safety

- a. Need to find more grants or set more programs in the public housing because that is one of the major problems-crime. Need to show more support without looking at money. There are ways to get things done without money.

Response: HPHA agrees and is committed to support tenant initiated programs, such as the tenant security walks as discussed with the RAB for all federal public housing throughout the state.

14. Pets

No public hearing comments were received.

15. Civil Rights Certifications

No public hearing comments were received.

16. Audit

No public hearing comments were received.

17. Asset Management

No public hearing comments were received.

18. Other Information

No public hearing comments were received.